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POP CORN

For the ~
~ HOME



THE PRODUCTION of pop corn for home use is to be encouraged. It gives the children a direct interest in farm life and affords pleasant recreation for the long winter evenings. A plat 2 rods square will be large enough to produce a good supply for one family. If more is grown than is wanted for home use the surplus usually can be disposed of at a profit. Any one of the common varieties will give satisfactory results if properly handled.

It is important to have the pop corn ripen fully on the stalk before harvesting, and for this reason it should be planted early in northern sections, so it will have a long season in which to grow and mature. When the stalks are dead the ears may be husked and should then be stored in a cool, well-ventilated place and protected against mice and squirrels.

POP CORN FOR THE HOME.

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CONTENTS.

	Page.		Page.
The home plat.....	4	Harvesting and storing pop corn---	6
Choice of a variety.....	5	Hand poppers.....	9
Planting pop corn.....	5	How to pop corn.....	10
Care of the growing crop.....	6	Home uses.....	11

POP CORN adds pleasure to country life. It affords a healthful treat for the family during the long winter evenings and the holiday season. The crisp, flaky pop corn is dear to the children's palate, and the "pop corn and Christmas hemlock spurting in the fire" have been enjoyed by both old and young for many



FIG. 1.—Pop corn in the garden.

generations. If every farm home would keep a supply of pop corn and a popper convenient, fewer nickels would be spent for less wholesome knickknacks and more enjoyable evenings would be spent around the family hearth.

Besides being a source of entertainment for the children, pop corn has considerable value as a food, and when properly prepared for the table it is superior to many of the breakfast foods now on the market.

THE HOME PLAT.

On many farms where pop corn is not grown as a market crop a few rows of it are planted in the garden for home use. This project usually interests the children and it is well to let them do the planting. Pop corn readily mixes with field corn and sweet corn planted near it. This mixing renders it unsuitable for use as seed and some



FIG. 2.—A high-school principal and his plat of pop corn.

of the old seed should be saved for next year's planting, or good seed should be procured from some other source if mixing has been possible.

If it is desired to grow pop corn as a field crop, the surplus stock that is not wanted for home use usually can be sold to local merchants at a fair price, or a profitable local trade may be built up by supplying it direct to consumers. Both of these methods should enable consumers to get a first-class article at a lower price than it would cost on the general market. This practice is to be encouraged, as it enables consumers to make their own pop-corn confections and thus have them fresh, in which state they are at their best. They also can be made more cheaply at home than they can be bought on the market.

A small plat in the garden or other convenient place 40 feet long and 20 feet wide should be large enough to produce from 75 to 100 pounds of pop corn, a good supply for the average family for home use. Pop corn growing in garden and field is shown in figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

CHOICE OF A VARIETY.

There are a large number of varieties of pop corn, from which selection can be made to suit almost any desire or fancy. Seedsmen catalogue not less than two dozen different varieties, though in a number of cases the same variety is listed under various names by different dealers. Many prefer the colored varieties for home use, and these usually please the children more than the standard commercial varieties shown in figures 5, 6, and 7. The ears of the Little Tom Thumb and the popped kernels of the Eight-Rowed and Queen's Golden varieties are popular for Christmas-tree decorations.

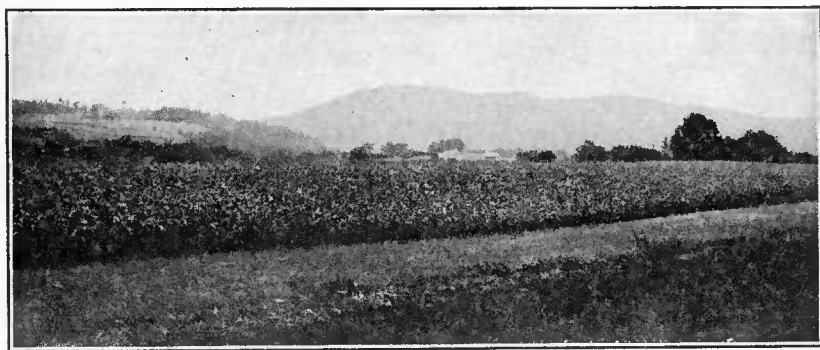


FIG. 3.—A pop-corn field in the Connecticut River valley.

Almost any variety of pop corn will give satisfactory results if handled properly, and by the careful selection of seed the chosen variety can be greatly improved.

PLANTING POP CORN.

To succeed best, pop corn for home use should not be left until the field and truck crops have been planted, but should be planted early, so it will have a long season in which to grow and mature. If harvested in an immature condition the popped kernels are not as flaky and crisp as those from fully ripened corn. A good time to plant is when the oak trees begin to show their new leaves, or as soon as the ground has dried enough to be worked. A warm, well-drained location, free from marshy places, should be selected. The soil should be plowed or spaded to a depth of 8 inches or more and the surface of the plat thoroughly pulverized before planting. The rows should be

about 3 feet apart. A small furrow 2 or 3 inches deep is sufficient. The kernels should be dropped 8 or 10 inches apart in the row and covered to a depth of about 1 inch. The planting should be done before the moist soil in the furrow has had time to dry out.

CARE OF THE GROWING CROP.

Grass and weeds should be kept down as much as possible while the corn is making its early growth, and the soil should be kept loose over the surface by frequent cultivation or hoeing. If only



FIG. 4.—A field of White Rice pop corn in Vermont.

a small plat is planted it is better to plant a number of short rows, as better pollination of the silks will be obtained and better filled ears will be produced than when growing in one long row.

HARVESTING AND STORING POP CORN.

The ears should be husked from the standing stalks and should be spread out in a well-ventilated place to dry and cure. The ears should not be piled up in a large heap or sacked before they are well dried out. It is best to leave the corn on the stalks until the

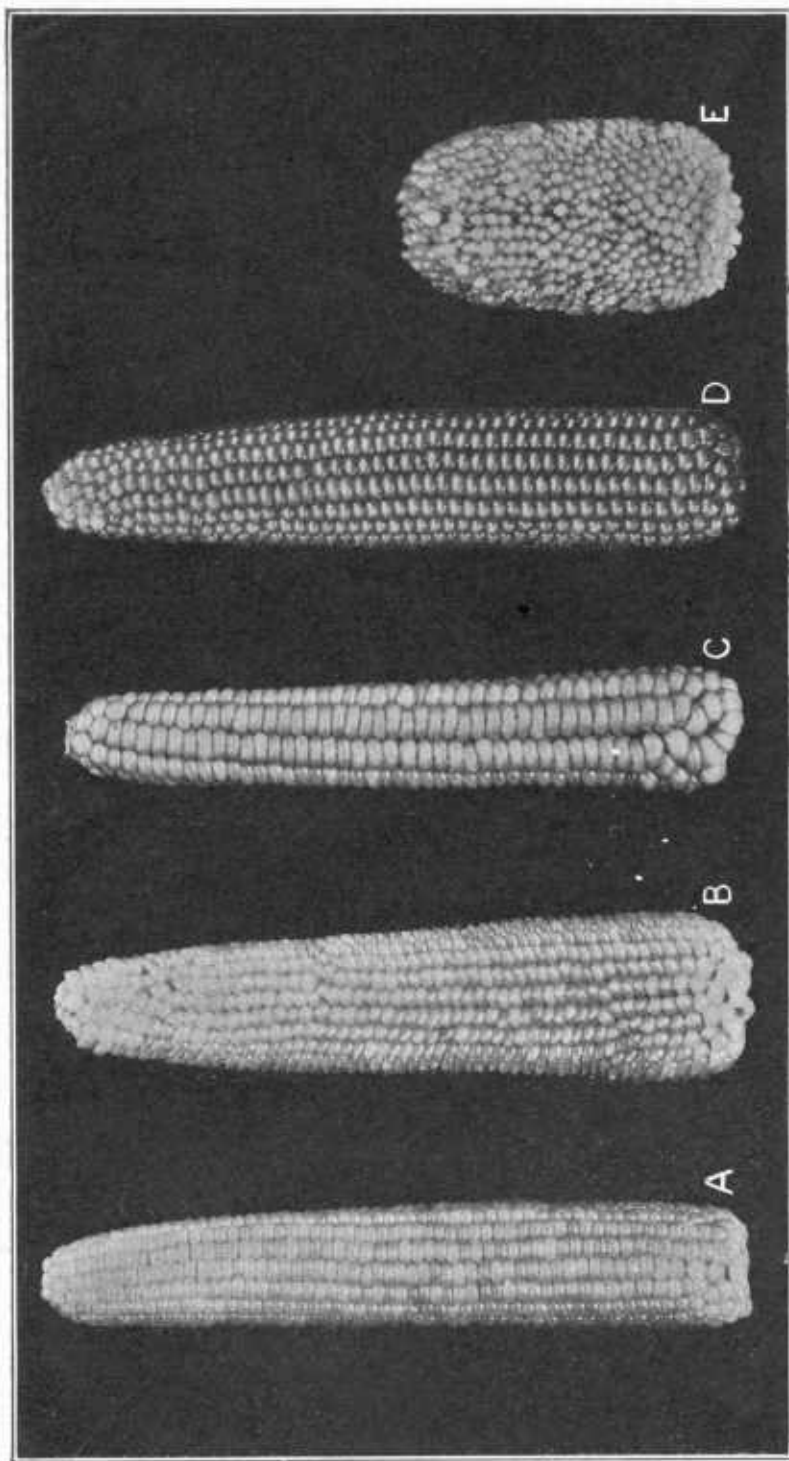


FIG. 5.—Ears of five varieties of pop corn : A, White Pearl ; B, White Rice ; C, Eight-Rowed ; D, Yellow Pearl ; E, Hull-less.

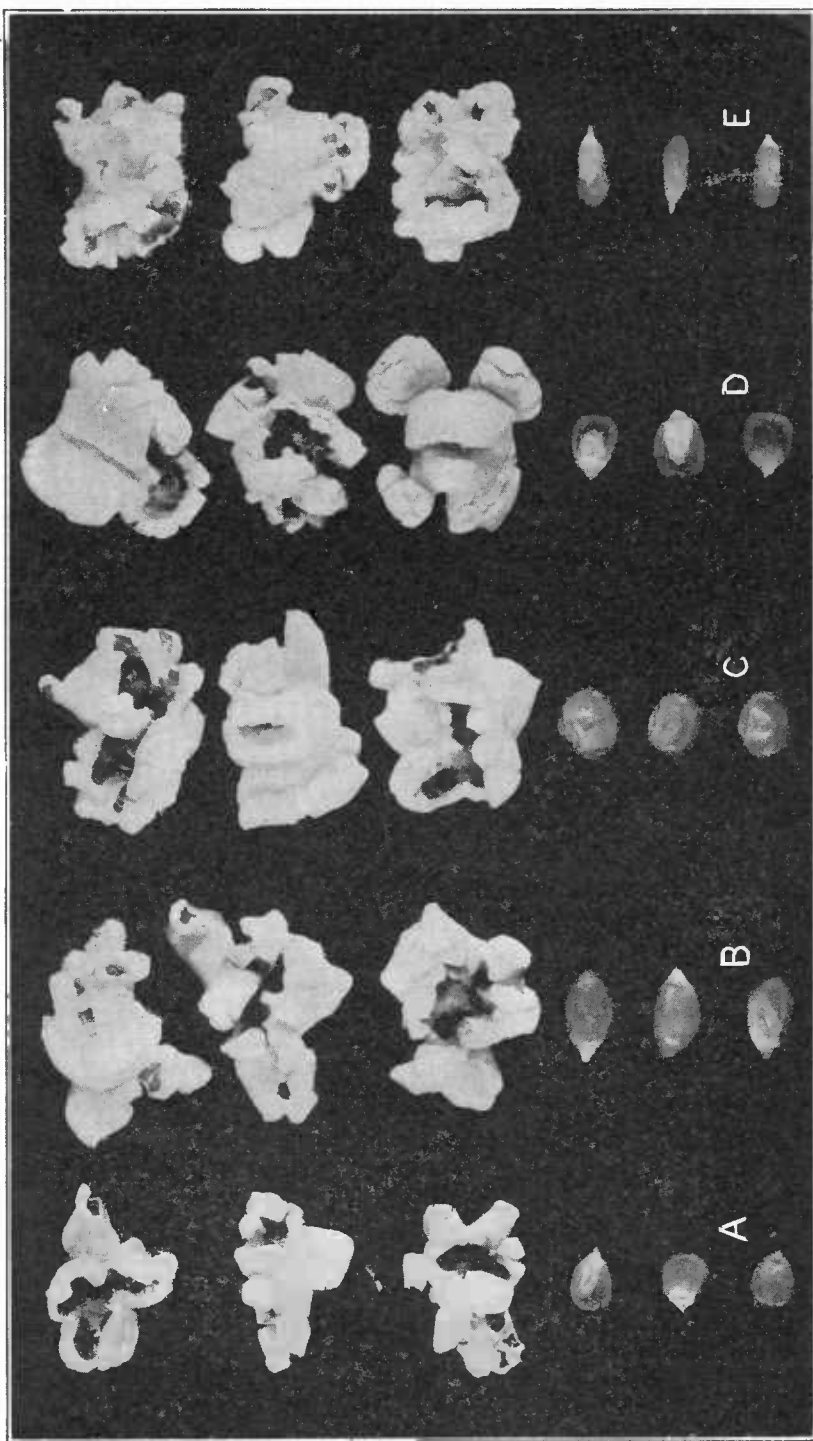


FIG. 6.—Popped and unpopped kernels of five varieties of pop corn: A, White Pearl; B, White Rice; C, Eight-Rowed; D, Yellow Pearl; E, Hull-less.

husks are dry and the stalks have lost their sappy condition. The ears may be stored in any place where the air can circulate around them freely and where they are safe from birds, mice, and squirrels. An overhead rack made of narrow slats or wire netting and suspended by wires in a shed is a good storage place for pop corn, or the ears may be strung and suspended from rafters in the garret. Pop corn should not be stored in a warm or heated room, as it will become too dry. Wire crates made of fine-mesh wire are convenient for storing it and afford protection against rats and mice.

New pop corn may be used for popping as soon as it has dried sufficiently. If properly stored it may be ready for use by Christmas. If old pop corn will not pop on account of having become too dry, the popping quality may be somewhat restored by moistening or sprinkling with water before popping. If very dry it may be put in a shaded place outdoors for a time, where it can absorb moisture from the air. This usually will restore the popping quality. Pop corn usually pops best when it contains about 12 per cent of moisture, which is about the amount it retains under natural atmospheric conditions. If the popping quality has been injured by freezing while yet green or immature, by harvesting before ripe, or by heating in curing, or if moths and weevils have damaged the corn, the trouble can not be remedied by these methods.



FIG. 7.—Stalks of White Rice pop corn.

HAND POPPERS.

In figure 8 are shown types of hand poppers. A popper like No. 4 can be used for popping corn in butter and lard. A common skillet supplied with a tin lid will answer the same purpose. No. 1 is a favorite style of popper and is carried in stock by stores. No. 2 is a satisfactory homemade wire popper.

HOW TO POP CORN.

For good results in popping, the main requisites are good corn and a hot fire. In popping, certain precautions may be observed to advantage.

Do not take too much pop corn at one time, not more than enough to barely cover the bottom of the popper one kernel deep. Hold the popper high enough above the fire or heat to keep from burning the kernels or scorching them too quickly. The right degree of heat for best results in popping should make good corn begin to pop in $1\frac{1}{2}$

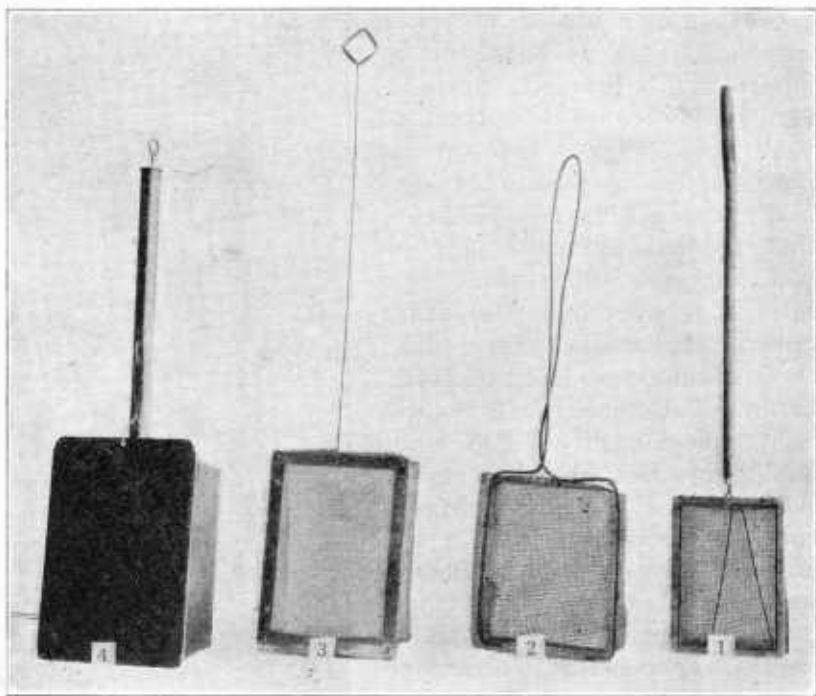


FIG. 8.—Four different types of hand poppers.

minutes. This should give the maximum volume increase in popping. If it begins to pop in less time or if a large quantity of corn is put into the hopper, it will not pop so crisp and flaky. If it takes much longer for the popping to begin, the heat is probably not great enough or the pop corn is of poor quality, or there may be other interfering causes, such as drafts of cold air.

To preserve the snowy whiteness of the popped kernels, the flame should be kept from striking them. This can be done by placing a plate of iron or a stove lid between the corn and the fire if a wire

popper is used or by using a pan popper if popping directly over a flame.

If the pop corn is in first-class condition and the heat properly applied, 1 pint of unpopped corn should give 15 to 20 pints of popped corn.

HOME USES.

Pop corn usually is popped to be eaten at once, or it may be made into pop-corn balls, crackajack, or other forms of pop-corn confection. A common way of preparing it is by popping and sprinkling it with salt or adding salt and melted butter. Sometimes the popped corn is eaten with milk and sugar like a breakfast food. The parched unpopped kernels when ground like coffee make a very good breakfast food for eating with cream and sugar or for boiling with water and serving like oatmeal. Some pop-corn sellers make a tasty preparation by popping the corn in melted butter and lard with salt added. Instead of butter and lard, it may be popped in corn oil or peanut oil. Both of these oils give a good flavor to the popped corn.

It is customary on some farms at butchering time in the fall to wind up the day's work by cooking a kettle full of pop corn. This is done by popping the corn in the greasy residue left in the kettle after the lard has been rendered. Salt is added to suit the taste and may be cooked in with the grease.

In some farmhouses the delicious pop-corn cake is considered necessary to the Christmas festivities and is regarded as a superior article of food.

Dealers who put up shelled pop corn in small packages for the retail trade usually have a number of good recipes printed on the outside of the packages. Cookbooks also give splendid recipes for making pop-corn confections. The following have given good results:

CHOCOLATE POP CORN.

2 teacupfuls of white sugar.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of corn sirup.

2 ounces of chocolate.
1 cup of water.

Put these ingredients into a kettle and cook them until the sirup hardens when put in cold water. Pour over 4 quarts of crisp, freshly popped corn and stir well to insure the uniform coating of the kernels.

SUGARED POP CORN.

Make a sirup by boiling together 2 teacupfuls of granulated sugar and 1 teacup of water. Boil until the sirup strings from the spoon or hardens when dropped into cold water. Pour over 6 quarts of freshly popped corn and stir well.

POP-CORN BALLS.

1 pint of sirup.
1 pint of sugar.

2 tablespoonfuls of butter.
1 teaspoonful of vinegar.

Cook till the sirup hardens when dropped into cold water. Remove to back of stove and add one-half teaspoonful of soda dissolved in a tablespoonful of hot water and then pour the hot sirup over 4 quarts of freshly popped corn, stirring till each kernel is well coated, when it can be molded into balls or into any desired form.

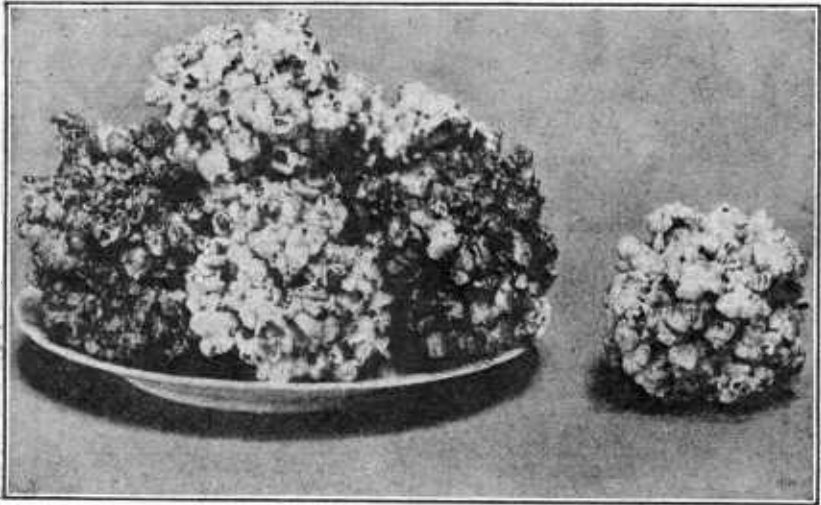


FIG. 9.—Homemade molasses and sirup pop-corn balls.

The pop-corn balls shown in figure 9 were made by this last recipe. The darker balls were made by using New Orleans molasses and the lighter colored ones by the use of maple sirup. Any good sirup or molasses can be used.